**Crib Sheet- Brinkburn Priory**

Some Children will ask questions about the site, so here is a really brief look at some of the key facts. If they ask something you remember reading in here – tell them you can look it up for them. If they ask something you have no idea about – tell them, and then ask the English Heritage lady!!

Brinkburn Priory was founded by William Bertram, Lord of Mitford, in 1135 as a house for monks from the Augustinian order. It was closed in 1536 with Henry VIII’s ‘Dissolution of the monasteries’ with which ‘Wolf Hall’ fans might be familiar. Two main buildings from the original settlement still remain – the church and the manor house.

**The Church**

Begun about 50 years after the Priory’s foundation, the church is the only complete surviving building of the monastery. The main body of the church has only one aisle, a common feature in Augustinian priories. The nave (west end) was used as the parish church for the local people in medieval times. The space would have been bare, as now, with no pews for the worshippers. (In those days, worshippers stood or brought along a folding stool!) The walls would have been plastered and, in parts, decorated with colourful wall paintings. (The ‘plain bare walls’ thing came with the Reformation and Oliver Cromwell’s Puritan revolution.)

The monastery buildings would have joined on to the church but very few remain. The original priory would have had a quadrangle, or cloister, surrounded by roofed passageways that connected the church to the domestic accommodation. Modern paving marks the position and partial restoration of the cloister alley roof.

Following the dissolution of the Priory in 1536, the monastic buildings were adapted to form a new building, the manor house. This remained a family home until 1953. Features of the original monastery can still be seen in its walls.

**The Monks**

The monks of Brinkburn Priory adopted the Rule of St Augustine of Hippo and were therefore known as Augustinian canons. (“Hippo” is in present-day Algeria). Like other orders, the monks shared the common vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. However, in addition they were priests, tending to the spiritual needs of lay people. It was this role as priests that meant they were known as canons rather than monks. The Augustinian canons were known as the Black Canons from the colour of their clothing.

Augustinian communities and monasteries tended to be smaller and less expensive to maintain than those of other orders. There would probably have been only 12 canons when Brinkburn Priory was founded, and only a few more during the life of the monastery. Ralph was the first Prior.

A typical day in the life of a canon at Brinkburn was structured around 7 services:

2am Matins - Night prayers

3am Lauds - Dawn prayers

6am Prime - Early morning (1st hour) prayers

Morning wash & breakfast followed by daily work. Some canons worked as priests, others instructed novices and some would read, write and study. More senior canons oversaw the administration of the Priory and its estates, farms and woodland whilst servants and cooks carried out more menial duties.

9am Terce - Mid-morning (3rd hour) prayers. Mass was celebrated during this service.

Daily meeting in the chapter house. During this meeting all the issues requiring collective discussion and decision were aired before the prior, after a reading by one of the canons from the chapters of their Rule.

12 noon Sext - Midday (6th hour) prayers

Dinner in the refectory followed by a siesta

6pm Vespers - Evening prayers

Light supper

7pm Compline - Night prayers, after which the canons retired to bed.